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ELED 310

Dr. Quezada

Oral History Project

Reflection of My Experience in Completing the Oral History Project

When given this assignment, I was under the impression that we were to link our families’ past with other events in history as a way to build a personal connection to history. I began to think of family members who would be available for an interview and would provide insight into time periods other than the present. First, I had to think of a list of people close to me who were still alive and who would be willing to answer questions. All of my grandparents and some aunts and uncles have passed on. So, I immediately thought my dad would be the best candidate for this assignment. I wanted to hear more about the life he led before having children.

I looked over the link provided in the wiki that lists possible questions to consider when interviewing someone for a personal history narrative. I pulled a few questions from this list to use as conversation starters. I also made a timeline of major historical events, such as the Great Depression, WWII, Korean War, and the Vietnam War so that I could find out how his life relates to these events. I wanted to take the timeline approach to this assignment since I was hoping he would tell me more about his experiences in these events now that I am no longer a child.

Through this assignment, I discovered things about my dad that I had not known before. For instance, I discovered that he was voted as the “Most Eligible Bachelor” at his college. I also learned that he is a recipient of the *Distinguished Flying Cross*. This is something he has never shared with my siblings and me before. I looked on the internet to find out more about what the Distinguished Flying Cross means. I discovered that earning this award is a pretty impressive feat. It is three steps above a Purple Heart. Through completing this assignment, I was able to learn a little bit more about my dad’s role in the Vietnam War, though most of it is still shrouded in mystery.

One of the interview questions dealt with how he met my mom and what they did on dates. I was surprised to learn that one of the things that reeled him in was my mom’s recipe for an apple strudel. This is one of the many recipes that my mother has passed on to me. I appreciated hearing about this piece of his past. I also appreciated hearing him compare and contrast technologies used during his lifetime to the technologies available today. He told me of how he would wait in line for over an hour to use the only long distance phone on base that was available for personal calls while he was serving overseas and keeping in touch with my mom. Today, the USO offers free calls with little to no wait time and the chance to email or Skype family members.

This project has allowed me to make a few more personal ties to history than I had before. I could easily see how this type of assignment could be useful in a classroom full of young students. In the elementary school setting, it is important for students to start learning about history on a local level before branching out to national and international topics. Also, by learning about people and places close to them they may be more interested in learning about historical topics.